Factors Affecting Neighbourhood Quality: A Conceptual Framework

Hamizah Abdul Fattah, Nurwati Badarulzaman, Kausar Ali

School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia

**ABSTRACT**

Neighbourhood quality can generally be determined using a similar approach as the quality of life (QoL). The context of a neighbourhood is based on a block of housing with their boundaries located within a same geographical area; while QoL expresses an individual’s or a society’s life satisfaction that cuts across a wider perspective and space. A study of neighbourhood quality attempts to highlight the characteristics of desirable and unfavourable neighbourhood conditions within a geographical setting. Hence, the attributions of neighbourhood quality might differ depending on individuals’ perspectives and interests. The paper aims to discuss the range of factors that affect neighbourhood quality as they vary in many scholarly research. Numerous studies that have examined neighbourhood characteristics did not emphasize the physical, social and economic context of neighbourhood. This paper presents a conceptual framework of the factors affecting neighbourhood quality of neighbourhood.

**INTRODUCTION**

A neighbourhood is bounded by a geographical area in the physical aspect; while the social context is seen as the residents’ interaction within the households that embodies the neighbourhood environment. A neighbourhood could be categorized as high income or vice versa based on the residents’ background profiles. Adequate and good public facilities and infrastructure provided within the neighbourhood might add to the residents’ level of satisfaction. Conversely, some factors possibly cause negative image of neighbourhoods such as crime, security and safety, inaccessibility, pollution and many more. Hence, the role and function of a neighbourhood can trigger the satisfaction level of the residents.

There are various definitions of a neighbourhood. The identification of a neighbourhood consists of the social and physical aspects under substantive and temporal perspectives for current conditions and future changes [1]. In this view, housing and neighbourhood evaluations are determined and predicted through mobility behaviour. On the other hand, neighbourhood features of physical, economic and social aspects have an influence on life satisfaction through the mediating effects of home satisfaction, housing satisfaction and neighbourhood satisfaction [2]. The congruality of these context is well understood since they only differed on the matter of assessment, either through the people’s perceptions and experiences of their neighbourhood or through the individual’s satisfaction towards his/her surroundings. A good neighbourhood is less dependent on social services and has decent economic self-sufficiency, in which the residents enjoy safety and neighbourhood satisfaction, good employment in a stress-free environment [3].

Some researchers emphasized that neighborhood quality and quality of life share similar aspects of social, physical and economic attributes [4]. An experience on what people have gone through indicates their feeling about the present condition. Likewise, an individual’s perceptions towards the environment and his/her self-satisfaction determines the quality of life [5]. The paper aims to identify those factors of neighbourhood quality which trigger residents’ satisfaction. Some scholars argued that residents may leave their neighbourhood when they feel some degree of dissatisfaction or if the households’ desires and preferences for housing and neighbourhood differ markedly from the actual condition [6,7,8]. Therefore, it is important to examine the neighbourhood attributes and the residents’ satisfaction towards their physical environmental, economic and...
community ties in the neighbourhood as such information will deliver interesting cues for the factors of neighbourhood quality.

**Conceptual Framework:**

Quality of life (QoL) is an index of people’s life satisfaction towards social, institutional and cultural factors. QoL is also measured to assess the people’s feelings, opinions and attitudes towards individual and personal situations through their cultural and social context [9]. General dimensions of measurement in the QoL could be categorized and assessed [10] through related theories, empirical studies, and pragmatism or intuitive appeals with some combination there of and the purpose of measurement [11]. In essence, QoL is derived from the satisfaction of physical, social and economic characteristics of neighbourhood [2] in a geographic space by people who have experienced it [12,13]. The neighbourhood quality assessment delivers a sense of community with quality of life indicators, which include an adequacy of physical, social and economic aspects and satisfaction by residents towards their housing and neighbourhood [14,15]. Instead of focusing on general life concerns, neighbourhood quality assesses the people’s reactions and their sense of prediction of an overall life quality [36].

There are various scales of neighbourhood. Firstly, the home area for the function of psycho-social benefits. Secondly, the locality which refers to residential activities, social status and position. The final scale focuses on the urban district and region which present a landscape of social and economic opportunities for the people. These function applied the mechanism of familiarity and community for the first scale. Locality appears to assist in planning, service provision and housing market. A wider scale of urban neighbourhood is matched with employment connection, leisure interest and social networks [16].

Neighbourhood satisfaction is a consequence of the environmental quality of life aspects involving the social, physical, economic and geographical area [12]; all of which are significant predictors of life satisfaction [2]. In addition, how well the neighbourhood meets the needs and desire of the residents [17] can be indicated through residents’ complaints or dissatisfactions. Hence, it is important to determine the residents’ mobility patterns and stability to enable individuals to improve their housing through neighbourhood satisfaction.

The neighbourhood quality can be illustrated in a two different views. The process of households moving into the neighbourhood and then moving out stimulates the mobility cycles. Firstly, the households gain the socio-economic status of the wider neighbourhood through the quality of physical environment and make upward moves in social status when they move to a better housing [6]. Households are likely to select neighbourhoods with good reputations, which indirectly reflects a positive image [18]. Secondly, moving out not only refers to neighbourhood conditions but also neighbourhood change [19]. Residential stress possibly arises when the actual characteristics of the neighbourhood is unfavourable and lacking in the preferred attributes [1]. Subsequently, the exposure of negative aspects of neighbourhood may seen naturally after some time [20].

There are many perceptions that can trigger a moving plan based on a personal assessment of neighborhood attributes. Individuals who are worried about safety issues in a ‘dangerous’ neighbourhood may influence their future mobility [21]. Similarly, a close-knit neighbourhood but with a low level of integration may drive a higher odds for moving in the future. An overall neighbourhood dissatisfaction level is also associated with a moving plan. For example, people are dissatisfied with the facilities are only slightly satisfied with the neighbourhood and the area [22]. Therefore, the evidence of neighbourhood characteristics have a potential to influence household mobility with the physical structure of neighbourhood such as building density, pollution, lack of green and public space, infrastructure and appearance of environment [23].

**Factors of Neighbourhood Quality:**

Neighbourhood quality consists of physical, social and economic attributes [14,21]. Various factors represent the contribution of neighbourhood quality with the following constructs; neighbourhood facilities, neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood economy and social environment [15] which emphasized the satisfaction level and needs by residents within the neighbourhood space. People are also concerned about the environmental factors on neighbourhood design with integration to accessibility and open space [6] while another study emphasized on the environment towards cleanliness, maintenance, security, quietness and privacy, ventilation, sunlight orientation and noise level in the neighbourhood [15]. General perceptions on the physical aspect are focused on public facilities, infrastructure and accessibility. The congruence occurs with the environmental aspect and physical context with perceived attributes of the environment and evaluation of the attributes of the surrounding environment [24].

The scholars emphasized the following attributes for neighbourhood quality determinants such as accessibility to the city centre, roads, buses, trams [14]. It also includes access to shopping malls and commercial buildings, green spaces and parks, as well as medical centres that serve social security. Anticipating factors by households are low levels of criminality and high levels of security. Meanwhile, the position of neighbourhood with respect to the city centre encounter residents’ needs by located strategic spot for housing environmental. Facilities in the house such as shops, markets, schools, clinic, mailing system,
community hall, playgrounds [25] and others are important for dwellers while satisfaction with housing, street lighting and noise level in the neighbourhood are among physical features affecting neighbourhood quality [25; 26].

The social characteristics in the local neighbourhood plays a significant role for residents than the broader neighbourhood [27]. Social interaction within the neighbours contribute to neighbourhood quality [28, 25, 29]. In another context, potential social interactions and social capital should not be considered together as an item since a construct that goes beyond social interaction would include notions of trust and social cohesion [30]. Social capital is an economic beneficial gains through experts or individual [31]. Neighbourhood attachment is a psychology bonds to places, often in the context of home and neighbourhood [32] with strong thoughts and feelings about the environment. People leaving the area with some significant memory towards the place is referred to as an ‘outcome’ while the ‘process’ is referred to as social or psychological processes occurring between the person and the place [5]. The research examined neighbourhood quality towards social characteristics namely as crime rate data, educational achievement and more [33].

Most research indicated the following economic factors of neighbourhood quality, namely house value, cost of living in the community and socio-economic status of the neighbourhood [7], employed housing costs and property values, and employment and job opportunities [34]. To generate income opportunity within the neighbourhood, the scholars described self-employees as non-scalable business in the community and a competitive imperfections in markets which have a limited potential [35]. They indicates discovery and creation opportunities are another indicator that give rise to self-employment opportunity.

**Conclusion:**

The paper presents the neighbourhood quality factors, which is similar as the quality of life approach, by examining the residents’ perceptions and cognition towards three major indicators of physical, social and economic attributes. Most people are concerned and have varying levels of satisfaction about their housing and neighbourhood surroundings. However, there are many items that combine and merge together between the neighbourhood, the place of context and the quality of life to form a more complex measurement indicators. In this conceptual framework, there are various predictors of neighbourhood quality and quality of life consisting of the physical, social and economic attributes. Ongoing and future research would further expand on the neighbourhood quality strands.

**Fig. 1:** Conceptual framework.

**REFERENCES**


